

CHAP. 40.

An Act to alter and regulate the Proceedings and Powers of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Society of Ireland, and for other purposes. [13th July 1871.] A.D. 1871.

WHEREAS a Society was established in the year one thousand eight hundred and eighteen, under the name of "The Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Society of Ireland" (herein-after called the Society), for the purpose of carrying out the general principles of the "Methodist Constitution," as agreed upon at a meeting of the representatives of that Society in Ireland, held on the fifth and sixth days of January of that year:

And whereas the Society has become possessed of certain stocks, funds, and securities for the use and benefit of the Society:

And whereas the Society are also possessed of certain preaching-houses, schools, and other buildings, tenements, and hereditaments, situate in Dublin and other parts of Ireland:

And whereas the Society are desirous of obtaining powers to invest moneys now belonging or which hereafter may belong to them on mortgage of real estate or other securities:

And whereas the Society are desirous of obtaining power to alter and regulate the proceedings and powers of the Society, and to carry on their work in co-operation or in conjunction with any Church or religious body or association in Ireland:

And whereas the Society since its formation has been governed by a Conference generally held in the month of June in every year:

And whereas in the month of November one thousand eight hundred and seventy, at a Conference specially summoned, it was determined, amongst other things, to seek powers to alter or amend the general principles or constitution of the Society, and the President of the Society was unanimously authorised to apply to Parliament for that purpose:

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And whereas it is expedient that the Society should have power to hold property on certain trusts, and to alter from time to time if necessary the design, discipline, laws, rules, and regulations of the Society, and that the Society should be enabled to unite or co-operate with any Church or religious body or association in Ireland:

And whereas the purposes aforesaid cannot be effected without the aid and authority of Parliament:

Be it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Interpretation of terms.

1. The following words and expressions shall have the meanings hereby assigned to them, unless there be something in the subject matter or context repugnant to such construction:

The words "the Society" mean the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Society of Ireland:

The words "the Conference" mean a Conference of the Society composed of the president or vice-president for the time being, and secretary, the travelling preachers in full connexion, and one steward or leader from each circuit or mission, elected annually by the stewards and leaders to represent the circuit at such Conference, present and voting thereat:

The words "vote of the Conference" mean for all the purposes of this Act a vote agreed to by not less than two thirds of the members of the Conference, composed as aforesaid, who shall be present and shall vote at such meeting.

Short title.

2. In citing this Act in other Acts of Parliament, and in legal instruments and proceedings, it shall be sufficient to use the expression "The Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Society of Ireland Act, 1871."

Property to be held upon trusts following.

3. From and after the passing of this Act, all the property, real and personal, at the date of such passing held upon any trust or trusts for the Society, and all other the property, real and personal, belonging or in anywise appertaining to or appropriated to the use of the Society, or connected therewith respectively, shall be held upon the trusts and to and for the uses, intents, and purposes following; that is to say,

Upon same trusts as at present until altered, and

Upon such trusts and to and for such uses, intents, and purposes, and subject to such powers and regulations, as the same property, real and personal, or any part thereof, is now respec-

tively held, or subject to such trusts, powers, and regulations as may hereafter be directed, limited, or appointed by a vote of the Conference, provided that such trusts, uses, intents, and purposes, powers and regulations, shall not be inconsistent with or in violation of this Act, or of any other law of this realm.

then upon such trusts as the Conference may direct.

4. Nothing in this Act contained shall authorise any alteration in the "doctrine" of the Society, as set forth in Part 2. of the "General Principles of the Methodist Constitution," (a copy of which is set forth in the schedule to this Act annexed,) but the design and discipline, as set forth in Parts 1. and 3. of the said General Principles, and the laws, rules, and regulations by or under which the qualification and election or appointment of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurers, travelling preachers, local preachers, stewards, leaders, visitors of the sick, trustees, and other officers, and the admission or cessor of members of the Society, have been regulated, and the Conference, the district meetings, leaders' meetings, band meetings, classes, and other meetings, and the business thereof, and the rights, powers, and functions of such president, vice-president, secretary, treasurers, travelling preachers, local preachers, stewards, leaders, visitors of the sick, trustees, and other officers as aforesaid, or of any conference or meeting, have been constituted, regulated, managed, conducted, or defined, and generally the existing design, discipline, laws, rules, and regulations of the Society, shall, after the passing of this Act, be and continue to be the design, discipline, laws, rules, and regulations of the Society, except so far as the same may be amended, altered, or repealed, or any new design, discipline, laws, rules, or regulations may be hereafter made according to the practice or rule existing in the Society before the passing of this Act, or by any vote of the Conference as herein-after provided.

Doctrine of Society to remain unaltered; rules, &c. to remain unaltered till changed by vote of the Conference.

5. All or any of the matters affecting the design, discipline, laws, rules, and regulations which now are or shall for the time being be the existing design, discipline, laws, rules, and regulations of the Society, may be amended, altered, or repealed, and any new design, discipline, laws, rules, and regulations of the Society, and for the management of the property thereof, and the carrying on of the affairs and business thereof, may be made in such manner and to such extent as may from time to time be hereafter determined on by a vote of the Conference; provided only that such amendments, alterations, and such new design, discipline, laws, rules, and

Design, discipline, rules, &c. of the Society may be changed by vote of the Conference.

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regulations, be not repugnant to this Act, or to the laws or statutes of the realm.

Design, discipline, rules, &c. to be binding and enforceable as to property in the temporal courts.

6. The design, discipline, laws, rules, and regulations shall be deemed to be binding on the members for the time being of the Society in the same manner as if such members had mutually contracted and agreed to abide by and observe the same, and shall be capable of being enforced in the temporal courts in relation to any property in the same manner and to the same extent as if such property had been expressly given, granted, or conveyed upon trust to be held, occupied, and enjoyed by persons who should observe and keep and be in all respects bound by the said design, discipline, laws, rules, and regulations.

Union with any Church or religious body in Ireland by vote of Conference.

7. The Society may, by a vote of the Conference, unite or co-operate with any Church or religious body or association in Ireland, upon such terms and conditions as the Society by a vote of the Conference may determine.

Conference may appoint trustees to hold property.

8. The Society shall be at liberty by a vote of the Conference to appoint any number of persons of their body, not exceeding fifteen, as trustees of the Society, with power to hold property, real and personal, for the Society, or any district, circuit, or station thereof, and shall and may in like manner, by vote, from time to time discharge any trustee so appointed, and appoint a new trustee or new trustees in the place of any trustee so discharged, or of any trustee dying, or declining, or becoming incapable of acting, and shall and may, by a like vote, make any rules or settle any plan for the appointment of any such new trustee or trustees: Provided always, that no person or persons shall be deemed to be a trustee or trustees within the meaning of this Act until the resolution upon which such vote of the Conference shall be taken, certified under the hand of the president and signed by such trustees or trustee, shall have been enrolled in the High Court of Chancery in Ireland.

Property to vest in a trustee or trustees so appointed.

9. In the event of the Society, by a vote of the Conference as aforesaid, appointing a trustee or trustees for the Society to hold all or any portion of the property, real and personal, belonging or in anywise appertaining to or appropriated to the use of the Society, or of any circuit, district, or station of the Society, or connected therewith, then all the said property, real and personal, affected or intended to be affected by such vote shall thereupon vest in such trustee or trustees as may from time to time be appointed in accordance with such vote, and be and continue to be held by

such trustee or trustees upon such trusts as may be decided by the vote of the Conference.

Power to invest funds on mortgage.

10. The moneys for the time being belonging to the Society may from time to time be invested, in the names of the trustees of the Society for the time being, on mortgage of any manors, messuages, lands, tenements, or hereditaments of a clear and indefeasible estate of inheritance, in fee simple, or fee farm in Ireland, free from incumbrances except quitrents and other small annual payments, or held upon any lease or leases for any term or terms of years, of which not less than sixty years shall be unexpired, or in the purchase of stock in the public funds of Great Britain or Ireland, or Bank of Ireland Stock, Parliamentary Securities, or any other securities upon which trustees may for the time being, according to the Statutes of the Realm, or the rules of the Court of Chancery in Ireland, be entitled to lend or invest trust funds, and the moneys or any part of the moneys so invested may be called in, and the payment of the same, and of the interest thereof, or any part thereof respectively, may be required and enforced when thought advisable so to do on the part of the Society: Provided always, that no money shall be so invested on mortgage unless, for the further security for the repayment of the money invested, and the interest thereof, the mortgage contain a power of sale, exercisable by or on behalf of the Society.

Proviso for cases in which the equity of redemption of the premises may be barred or released.

11. Provided always, that in every case in which the equity of redemption of the premises comprised in any such security shall become liable to foreclosure, or otherwise barred or released, the same shall be thenceforth held in trust to be sold and converted into money, and shall be sold accordingly; and if any decree shall be made in any suit for the purpose of redeeming or enforcing such security, such decree shall direct a sale (in default of redemption) and not a foreclosure of such premises.

How expenses of Act to be paid.

12. All the costs, charges, and expenses preliminary to, and of and incidental to, the preparing, applying for, obtaining, and passing of this Act shall be paid by the Society.

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SCHEDULE to which the foregoing Act refers.

General Principles of the Methodist Constitution agreed upon in Dublin at a Meeting of Representatives held on the 5th and 6th January 1818, *and fully agreed to and ratified at a General Meeting convened at Clones, on the 21st instant, to re-establish Methodism on its original basis, agreeably to Primitive Wesleyan Methodism.*

Q. 1. What is requisite to form and cement a Christian society?
A. Unity of Design, Unity of Doctrine, and Uniformity of Discipline.

1ST.—OF DESIGN.

Q. 2. What is the Design of the Methodist Society?
A. It is thus expressed by Mr. Wesley:—"A body of people, who, being "of no sect or party, are friends to all parties; and endeavour to forward all "in heart religion, in the knowledge and love of God and man."

Q. 3. In what point of view, then, does the Methodist Society consider itself?
A. Not as an independent Church, nor its preachers as independent ministers; preachers and people conjointly constitute a purely Religious Society to build each other up; to enjoy the blessings of Christian fellowship, and to promote, by precept and example, the knowledge and practice of vital godliness.

Q. 4. Does this imply a distinct and separate communion, in celebrating the two Christian Ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper?
A. By no means; as the members of the Methodist Society may belong to external visible Churches established under different forms; each member is left at perfect liberty to partake of those Ordinances in the communion to which he or she respectively belongs.

Q. 5. Does not the Methodist Society profess to belong to the Church of England?
A. Yes, as a body; for they originally emanated from the Church of England; and the Rev. John Wesley, the venerable founder of the Connection, made a declaration of similar import within less than a year preceding his

decease, viz.:—"I declare once more, that I live and die a member of the "Church of England; and that none who regard my judgment or advice will "ever separate from it." (See Arminian Magazine, for April, 1790.) This, however, is not now to be understood as interfering with the right of private judgment, in cases where education or prejudices attach members to other Established Churches.

2ND.—OF DOCTRINE.

Q. 6. What is the foundation of the Methodist Doctrines?

A. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

Q. 7. Wherein consists the Unity of the Methodist Doctrine?

A. In teaching and enforcing those doctrines only which are contained in the Scriptures, as taught and explained in the writings of the Rev. John Wesley, and Rev. John Fletcher, particularly Mr. Wesley's notes on the Old and New Testament, his eight volumes of Sermons, his appeals, and the doctrinal parts of the Arminian Magazine as maintained by him, and published to the period of his decease, also Mr. Fletcher's Checks and letters, published by Mr. Wesley.

3RD.—OF DISCIPLINE.

Q. 8. How is the discipline of the Methodist body to be regulated so as to be uniform throughout the Connection?

A. By the general principles and regulations laid down in Mr. Wesley's larger Minutes, as published by himself in the year 1789.

Q. 9. What shall we do in order to preserve Methodism in its original state in Ireland, as at the period of Mr. Wesley's decease in March, 1791?

A. By a recurrence to original principles, re-establish Methodism in its primitive simplicity, appointing to each their duty and station.

Q. 10. What are the gradations of station in the Methodist Connection?

A. First,—Preachers.
Second,—Stewards and Leaders.
Third,—Private Members.

Q. 11. What is the office of a Methodist Preacher?

A. His sole vocation as called and sent out by the Methodist Connection, is to declare a free, universal, and everlasting Gospel, which is glad tidings to all people, through the merits of Christ alone, agreeably to that declaration of St. Paul—"I am sent not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel."

Q. 12. Is this view of his calling agreeable to Mr. Wesley's opinion, and that discipline which he established?

A. Mr. Wesley declared it to be so, both from the pulpit and the press; in full corroboration of this truth, we refer particularly to a Sermon of his, preached in Cork, on Heb. v. 4, and afterwards published by himself in the

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Arminian Magazine, for June, 1790, in which discourse he has clearly shown that the office of a priest is totally distinct and separate from the office of a preacher or expounder of God's Word and Will, sometimes called a prophet.

Q. 13. Has not Mr. Wesley's exposition of that text, Heb. v. and 4, been controverted?

A. It has been controverted by some of the preachers, who wished to break in upon the Scriptural and uniform plan of Mr. Wesley's discipline. But we adopt the principles there laid down, and receive Preachers under this view of their office only.

Q. 14. What is the office of a Leader?

A. To take the spiritual charge of a certain number of persons committed to his care, in what is called a class: to meet them collectively every week; and, if possible, see each member of his class weekly. He is regularly to attend the leader's meeting, in places where such meeting is established. He is to be present at every quarterly meeting, if not unavoidably prevented; and assist the Preachers of the Circuit in every matter relative to the good government of the Society, according to our declared fundamental principles.

Q. 15. What is the qualification for a Leader?

A. He is to be a person of approved and upright conversation and conduct; and one that enjoys the happiness of possessing sound Christian experience. And before he is fully permitted to the office and privileges of a leader, he is to subscribe in a book, to be provided for the purpose, in each Circuit, to these fundamental principles, which are herein laid down as a basis of the Methodist Constitution, according to original principles.

Q. 16. What is the duty of a Steward?

A. To take the general charge of the temporal concerns of the Society or Circuit in which he is appointed, particularly of all the money transactions, both receipts and disbursements, in all which he is to act faithfully, as one who is to give a strict account to God.

Q. 17. What is the duty of Private Members?

A. To abide in their station, according to the rules of the Society, published by Mr. Wesley.

Q. 18. To whom is confided the government of the Connection?

A. To the Conference.

Q. 19. Did Mr. Wesley establish a Conference?

A. He did; a conference of preachers directed by himself, received and sent out according to the principles maintained by him in his exposition of Heb. v. 4 before-mentioned.

Q. 20. Why do we separate from the majority of the Conference, claiming to be the successors of that established by Mr. Wesley?

A. Because they have changed the discipline established by Mr. Wesley. Not content with the honourable office of being preachers of the Gospel simply, they have assumed to themselves the priestly office, by administering the

Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, without appointment or ordination, against Mr. Wesley's express opinion on the subject.

Q. 21. Has it not been urged that Mr. Wesley himself ordained some Preachers to administer the Ordinances; and has not this been resorted to as an apology by the preachers, for their late innovation?

A. Supposing it to be true, that Mr. Wesley was prevailed upon to select for such an appointment, it is the fullest confirmation, that his decided opinion was against the administration of the Ordinances by the preachers generally; therefore, this attempt to shelter themselves under the sanction of Mr. Wesley's authority is perfectly nugatory, and carries its own refutation.

Q. 22. In consequence of the loose principles of discipline set afloat in supporting the late innovation, the very great irregularity has been maintained by some, of the right of a private celebration of the Ordinances amongst themselves; what is our opinion of such practice?

A. We consider the principle as calculated to produce confusion in the Church of God, and the practice to bring the Ordinances into contempt; we therefore judge, that persons concerned in such irregular administration shall be excluded from our Society.

Q. 23. As the Conference is the governing body, who constitute the Conference?

A. All the travelling Preachers in the Connection, and one Steward or Leader from each Circuit, to be annually elected by the Stewards and Leaders convened at a quarterly meeting.

Q. 24. Have all the members of Conference so constituted an equal voice in the concerns of the body?

A. During the examination of the Preachers' characters, Preachers only are to be present and decide. During the appointments to the Circuits, all the members may be present and give their opinion; but the Preachers are to decide. During every other business or discussion, all the members may sit, speak, and vote without distinction.

Q. 25. How is the stationing of Preachers to be regulated?

A. By a stationing committee, to be elected by Conference annually, to consist of an equal number of Preachers and Representatives, who, in the committee, are all to have an equal voice in making the arrangement, which is to be submitted to Conference, as under the foregoing question and answer.

Q. 26. What is the regulation respecting the receiving of new Preachers?

A. No person can be received as a Preacher who does not come recommended by the Stewards and Leaders of the Circuit to which he belongs, assembled at a quarterly meeting.

Q. 27. Why is one Steward or Leader from each Circuit appointed to sit in Conference?

A. To assist by their counsel and advice in matters of vital importance to the Connection; and to take the labour and responsibility of managing the financial concerns, in order to relieve the Preachers from the weight of temporal matters, which might interfere with their usefulness.

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Q. 28. Is this any deviation from Primitive Methodism?

A. We conceive not. It is both rational and Scriptural; and the principle of an open Conference is admitted by Mr. Wesley, in the first formation of Methodism.*

* See Mr. Wesley's Minutes for the year 1746.

Q. 29. What shall be done to prevent the evil which might arise in future, by an attempted encroachment on these fundamental principles?

A. Let every member of the Conference, as a qualification to sit, speak, or vote therein, declare under his hand, in a book to be provided for the purpose, his unfeigned assent and consent thereto; and his sincere determination to abide in strict conformity to them, as long as he shall continue a member of the Conference, and let all the General Acts, and specific regulations of Conference, proceed accordingly.

Q. 30. Can any further barrier be placed to resist and suppress a future spirit of innovation?

A. As we uniformly declare, that our one object is to constitute a Religious Society, and preserve harmony among ourselves, and not to erect ourselves into a new Church, we do hereby pronounce our judgment, that if any member of the Conference shall propose any resolution subversive of this principle, or opposed to the Design, Doctrine, or Discipline herein contained, he is unworthy to be a member of the Conference, and thereby excludes himself.

Agreed to unanimously, and signed for and in the behalf of the Assembled Representatives,

ADAM AVERELL, DUBLIN.
SAMUEL MOORHEAD, CLONES.

LONDON: Printed by GEORGE EDWARD EYRE and WILLIAM SPOTTISWOODE, Printers to the Queen's most Excellent Majesty. 1871.